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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 000707

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DEPT FOR AF/RSA KMOODY
AF/S FOR B.WALCH
DRL FOR N. WILETT
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU
ADDIS ABABA FOR ACSS
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR J. HARMON AND L. DOBBINS
STATE PASS TO HOUSE FOR STEPHANE LEBOUDER
STATE PASS TO NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR MICHELLE GAVIN

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [PHUM](#) [OREP](#) [ZI](#)
SUBJECT: CODEL MEEKS MEETING WITH MUGABE

REF: HARARE 456

Classified By: CDA Donald K. Petterson for reason 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

11. (SBU) In a brief meeting with CODEL Meeks, truncated by the CODEL's departure schedule, President Robert Mugabe lapsed into historical reveries, praised the Global Political Agreement (GPA), saying that only "little issues" remained, and questioned sanctions. Constrained by time, Congressman Gregory Meeks said that a new day had arrived and that the U.S. sought better relations with Zimbabwe. The government mouthpiece "The Herald" spun the two-day CODEL visit as focused on meeting Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai and the meeting with Mugabe as "impromptu" and a slight to the president. END SUMMARY.

12. (SBU) Congressman Meeks led a delegation that also included Congressman Melvin Watt, Congresswoman Sheila Jackson-Lee, Congressman Jack Kingston, and Congresswoman Marcia Fudge on a two-day trip to Harare September 2 and September 3. Post had requested a meeting with Mugabe two weeks earlier and renewed the request, upon the CODEL'S arrival on September 2, to Foreign Minister Mumbengegwi who was at the airport to greet the CODEL. We also noted to Mumbengegwi the CODEL'S departure time on September 3 in the event a meeting was arranged. Nevertheless, it was only minutes before the delegation was due to depart for the airport that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) informed us that Mugabe was available. The delegation, accompanied by Charge Petterson, immediately proceeded to State House where we once again emphasized time constraints. Mugabe was joined at the meeting by Minister of State in the Office of the President Didymus Mutasa, Mumbengegwi, and several MFA officials.

¶3. (SBU) Mugabe greeted the delegation to Zimbabwe and immediately lapsed, as he is wont to do both in public speeches and private meetings (Ref), into a historical recounting of Zimbabwe's independence struggle and the Lancaster House agreement which resulted in Zimbabwe's independence. After about 20 minutes, realizing that Mugabe was at 1980 and that it could take another hour or more for him to reach 2009, Meeks interrupted and apologized that the delegation had to cut short the meeting. Apparently understanding for the first time that the delegation could not settle in for an afternoon of historical reminiscence, Mugabe fast-forwarded to land reform, the failure of which he blamed on former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, and then quickly questioned why the U.S. had imposed sanctions since Zimbabwe's disagreements were with the UK and not the U.S.

¶4. (SBU) Mugabe concluded with a discussion of the GPA. He thought that it was proceeding well, and differences between the parties were "little issues." He saw no reason for Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe Governor Gideon Gono and Attorney QReserve Bank of Zimbabwe Governor Gideon Gono and Attorney General Johannes Tomana to go because he had properly appointed them. Likewise, appointment of governors was a presidential prerogative and there was no need to revisit this issue.

¶5. (SBU) Constrained by time, Meeks told Mugabe that a new day had arrived with the presidency of Barack Obama and that the U.S. sought better relations with the Zimbabwean government. He hoped he would later be able to speak at length with Mugabe and promised to return before the end of

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the year. Mugabe, in a pleasant manner, asked as the delegation was leaving why the U.S. had singled out Zimbabwe, of all the countries in the world, for the infliction of "the monster" of ZDERA.

¶6. (U) "The Herald", in an article entitled "US Congressional team's visit raises eyebrows," claimed the call on Mugabe was "impromptu" as the delegation had not intended to meet Mugabe, but decided at the last minute to see him to make their visit look impartial after they had met with Tsvangirai. Presidential Spokesman George Charamba was quoted in "The Herald" saying, "The visit seems to have been focused on one party in the GPA. Their visit to State House was a self-fulfilling one and even the President was taken aback." In the article, "The Herald" also reported that Meeks is on the Board of the National Endowment for Democracy that has provided financing to "a raft of non-governmental organisations that have been pushing the illegal regime change agenda in Zimbabwe," and that Jackson-Lee voted for "illegal economic sanctions" against Zimbabwe in 2001, backed sanctions against Sudan that were opposed by the African Union, and was arrested for disorderly conduct outside the Sudanese Embassy.

COMMENT

¶7. (C) The MFA is wary of meetings between U.S. officials and Mugabe; hence, at the airport before the CODEL arrived, Mumbengegwi sought from the Charge the purpose of the visit and what the CODEL hoped to raise with Mugabe. Nevertheless, the GOZ wants such meetings to take place as it demonstrates, particularly in light of Prime Minister Tsvangirai's travels, international engagement between the West and Mugabe.

¶8. (C) Mugabe appeared frail although alert. Either because he was not briefed, or because he did not absorb a briefing if one took place, he was ill-prepared for the meeting; and rather than engaging with the CODEL he lapsed into what he knows best: the anti-colonial struggle, the Lancaster House agreement, and (perceived) UK efforts to frustrate land reform.

¶9. (C) As noted, we had tried to schedule a meeting with Mugabe for a couple of weeks. Apparently concerned that the short length of the meeting -- which it was responsible for -- would compare unfavorably with the hour-long meeting with Tsvangirai (Septel), the GOZ decided to spin the meeting as a U.S. slight to Mugabe. END COMMENT.

¶10. (SBU) The CODEL did not have the opportunity to clear this message before departing Harare.

PETTERSON